

cellular structure made of one or more pieces and positioned to support the at least one laminate layer and the at least one board layer. The construction element is configured to be operatively connectable to at least another construction element.

The present invention is directed to a bowling lane construction element. As such, the construction element is capable of withstanding the forces that a bowling lane typically encounters. Due to its unique construction, the present invention can greatly reduce the weight of a bowling lane as compared to known bowling lane constructions. Also, the present invention makes it possible to erect a lane for temporary use. The present invention also provides a very stable bowling lane construction. The invention represents a completely new way of thinking in the field of bowling lanes that none of the cited references disclose or suggest.

The Examiner rejected claims 11-27 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Honeycomb Products in view of Paneltec.

The Honeycomb Products and Paneltec references are not valid references since neither one includes a valid publication date that makes them a valid reference under 35 U.S.C. § 103. The only date that appears on the references is June 12, 2002. The priority application for this case was filed December 18, 1998.

The Examiner includes a publication date for each of the web page references. However, these dates do not appear on any of the references. Also, the earliest date for any of the references is December 1998. Even this date is not necessarily sufficient to make this a valid

reference. The Examiner provides publication dates of January 2000 and June 2001 for other web page references. Both dates are well after the priority date for this application.

The Examiner provides a publication date of June 2001 for the Paneltec reference, which is after the June 2000 publication date for the PCT application of which this application is the National Stage. Moreover, the construction element was the subject of an advertisement included as a brochure with the June 2001 issue of International Bowling Industry, Vol. 9, No. 6. A copy of the cover of the magazine, the brochure, and a convention notice included in the magazine are attached hereto. Applicants particularly direct the Examiner's attention to the back page of the brochure, which shows the construction element in a cut-away view. Not only is the date of the Paneltec reference too late for it to be useful as a reference, there is no reason that the Paneltec reference could not have been copied from the International Publication of the PCT application or the enclosed brochure.

Even if the Honeycomb products reference were a valid reference, it only suggests cellulose-based products, such as paper or cardboard. Such products are not suitable for use in bowling lanes due to their inability to withstand the loads that a bowling lane is subject to. Also, if such products become wetted or dirty, the effects are not reversible. The nature of the loads that the Honeycomb products are capable of withstanding are discussed in the reference. These examples are much less than the loads that a bowling lane is subjected to.

The Examiner does not list Brunst et al. in the rejection, but only mentions it in passing in the discussion. Nevertheless, Brunst et al. does not suggest the present invention since, among

other things, Brunst et al. does not suggest a board layer between a laminate layer and a supporting structure layer. The present invention as recited in independent claim 11 includes a laminate layer, a board layer and a supporting structure layer. On the other hand, Brunst et al. only suggests a composite panel that includes a laminate layer 31 and a core layer 20. The core is formed of wood strips that are attached to each other. Each face of the core is covered with a high pressure laminate.

Brunst et al. also does not suggest a cellular core layer. However, even if the board core suggested by Brunst et al. were replaced with a cellular core layer, the combined structure would still lack the board layer of the present invention. The board layer in the construction element is an important part because the other layers are less able or incapable of receiving the impacts that are common in bowling lanes.

In the rejection, the Examiner states that using honeycomb panels "would have been an obvious matter of design choice". However, the Examiner does not give any reasoning why one would make such a substitution. It is known buckling and warpage effects can occur in connection with honeycomb structures. These buckling and warpage effects are highly undesirable features in the construction element for a bowling lane. In view of the above, one of ordinary skill in the art would not consider utilizing a honeycomb structure in a bowling lane construction.

In view of the above, the references relied upon in the Office Action, whether considered alone or in combination, do not suggest patentable features of the present invention. Therefore,

the references relied upon in the Office Action, whether considered alone or in combination, do not make the present invention obvious. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection based on the cited references.

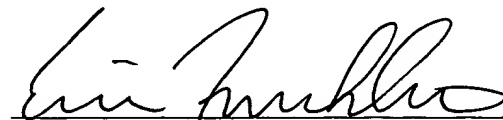
In conclusion, Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of this case and early issuance of the Notice of Allowance.

If the Examiner believes that an interview would facilitate the prosecution of this application, Applicants respectfully urge the Examiner to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The undersigned authorizes the Commissioner to charge any insufficient fees or any credit overpayment associated with this communication to Deposit Account 19-5127, 19380.0006.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 9-19-02



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VOL. 9, NO. 6 • JUNE 2001

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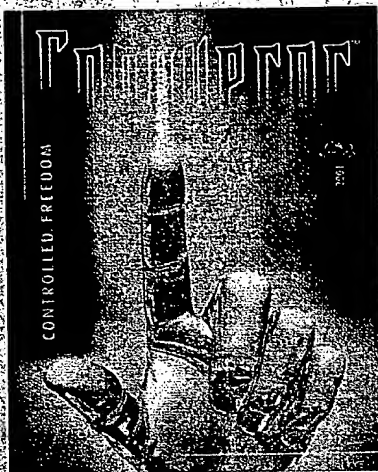
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For more info circle 140 on reader service card

EBONITE INTERNATIONAL Booth No. 731

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Ebonite International presents "Tournament Coordinator," comprehensive software for getting a handle on tournaments. The CD-ROM package includes an easy-to-understand instruction manual and a feature-packed program that runs a variety of tournaments, including royalty-free brackets and sidepots, prints out real time standings and payouts, captures winner amounts automatically, records tournament histories, and more. On the marketing side, you can compile bowler names and addresses.

The program has impressive capacities: up to 20 rounds per tournament, 999 teams per squad, 2,200 brackets per squad, and 999 brackets per person, for instance.

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SYSTEM 300 GROUP

Synthetic Lanes

Synthetic lanes from Finland-based System 300 are made of thick, homogeneous HPL laminate specially developed for lanes. Meeting all required specifica-



tions for performance, slide characteristics and low maintenance, the lanes are available with Pow R Deck pindecks, which the company describes as indestructible, and the patent-pending Pow R Bounce automatic bumper system.

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Convention Tip:
Use a tape recorder to record seminars. That way you'll have a record of valuable ideas that may be forgotten over the course of the show.

CLUB 300 Booth No. 1020

Insurance

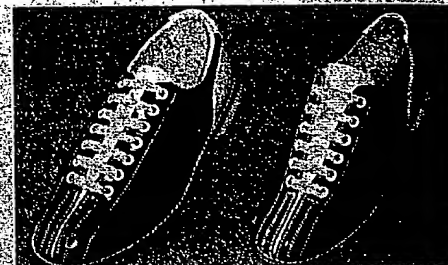
Club 300, the BPAA quality connection vendor for property and casualty insurance, is in its fourth year with the BPAA. Over the past year, many major insurance carriers have withdrawn from the bowling center market. The Dallas, TX-based company remains stable and has an A+ rating from A.M. Best. For rates, contact them at their website at www.club300.com, or through the BPAA's website at www.bpaa.com. Proprietors can access information about the program, complete an application and receive an insurance proposal via e-mail. Club 300 can be contacted toll free at 877-258-2300, or through your local agent.

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HIGHSCORE PRODUCTS/W

Bowling Shoes

HighScore Products/Wa-Mac, Inc., based in Carlstadt, NJ, has expanded its line of lace-to-toe, all leather bowling rental shoes to include children's sizes starting at size 11, and going through men's size 18. These are the same high-



quality shoes that the company has been providing for many years. They're constructed of the best grade of genuine cowhide and have proved to be extremely durable. These shoes are being offered as low as \$11.75 per pair.

The company also has many other bowling items available from their full-color catalog.

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ACE MITCHELL Booth No. 436

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